



GRALLINA AUSTRALIS..



# GRALLINA AUSTRALIS, G. R. Gray.

## Pied Grallina.

*Gracula picata*, Lath. Ind. Orn. Supp., p. 29.

*Pied Grakle*, Lath. Gen. Syn. Supp., vol. ii. p. 130.—Ib. Gen. Hist., vol. iii. p. 169.

*Tanypus Australis*, Oppel.

*Grallina melanoleuca*, Vieill. Anal. d'une Nouv. Orn., pp. 42 and 68.—Ib. Gal. des Ois., pl. 150.—Ib. 2nde Edit. du Dict. d'Hist. Nat., tom. xiii. p. 41, pl. F. 32.—Ib. Ency. Méth. Orn., Part II. p. 693.—Vig. and Horsf. in Linn. Trans., vol. xv. p. 233.

*Grallina bicolor*, Vig. and Horsf. in Linn. Trans., vol. xv. p. 233.

*Grallina Australis*, G. R. Gray, List of Gen. of Birds, 2nd Edit. p. 33.

*Grallina picata*, Strickl. in Mag. Nat. Hist., vol. ii. p. 335.

*Corvus cyanoleucos*, Lath. Gen. Hist. vol. iii. p. 49?

*Magpie Lark*, Colonists of New South Wales.

*Little Magpie*, Colonists of Swan River.

*Bÿ-yoo-gool-yee-de*, Aborigines of the lowland, and

*Diſ-a-but*, Aborigines of the mountain districts of Western Australia.

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FUTURE research will, in all probability, establish the fact of this bird being universally dispersed over the greater portion of Australia; I have specimens in my collection from New South Wales, Swan River, and Port Essington, all of which are so closely alike that no character of sufficient importance to establish a second species can be detected. Those that came under my observation in New South Wales were never seen very near the coast, but frequented the rich alluvial flats and sides of the creeks and rivulets of the interior.

Few of the Australian birds are more attractive than the present, or more elegant and graceful in its actions, and these, combined with its tame and familiar disposition, must ever obtain for it the friendship and protection of the settlers, whose verandahs and house-tops it constantly visits, running along the latter like the Pied Wagtail of our own island; in fact, the two birds, except in size, are very similar. Mr. Gilbert states that in Western Australia he observed it congregated in large families on the banks and muddy flats of the lakes around Perth, while in the interior he only met with it in pairs, or at most in small groups of not more than four or five together; he further observes, that at Port Essington, on the north coast, it would seem to be only an occasional visitant, for on his arrival there in July it was tolerably abundant round the lakes and swamps, but from the setting-in of the rainy season in November to his leaving that part of the country in the following March not an individual was to be seen; it is evident therefore that the bird removes from one locality to another according to the season and the more or less abundance of its peculiar food. I believe it feeds solely upon insects of various kinds, particularly aquatic grubs, grasshoppers, and coleoptera generally.

The flight of the *Grallina* is very peculiar, and unlike that of any other Australian bird that has come under my notice; it much resembles that of the Common Pewit of Europe, and is performed with the same heavy flapping motion of the wings; still the flight of the two birds differs materially during their passage through the air, the *Grallina* passing noiselessly and generally in a straight line, while the Pewit makes sudden turns and dips,—a peculiarity in its mode of flight which must have been noticed by all who have seen the bird on the wing.

Its natural note is a peculiarly shrill whining whistle often repeated.

The nest may be regarded as one of the anomalies of Australia, so unlike is it to anything usually met with; it is from five to six inches in breadth and three in depth, and is formed of soft mud, which soon becoming hard and solid upon exposure to the atmosphere has precisely the appearance of a massive clay-coloured earthenware vessel; as if to attract notice, this singular structure is generally placed on some bare horizontal branch, often on the one most exposed to view, sometimes overhanging water and at others in the open forest. The colour of the nest varies with that of the material of which it is formed: sometimes the clay or mud is sufficiently tenacious to be used without any other material, but in those situations where no mud or clay is to be obtained it is constructed of black or brown mould; the bird, appearing to be aware that this substance will not hold together for want of the adhesive quality of the clay, mixes with it a great quantity of dried grass, stalks, &c., and thus forms a firm and hard exterior, the inside of which is slightly lined with dried grasses and a few feathers. The eggs differ considerably in colour and in shape, some being